

VZCZCXRO8623  
PP RUEHAG RUEHROV RUEHSL RUEHSR  
DE RUEHCV #0980 2092019  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 282019Z JUL 09  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3461  
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY  
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 000980

SIPDIS

HQSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
DEPARTMENT PASS TO AID/OTI (RPORTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/27/2024  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [SNAR](#) [VE](#)  
SUBJECT: VENEZUELA CONDITIONS NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS ON  
ENDING CRITICAL U.S. REPORTS

REF: A. CARACAS 935  
[1](#)B. CARACAS 934  
[1](#)C. IIR 6 902 0147 09  
[1](#)D. CARACAS 779  
[1](#)E. CARACAS 265

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Darnall Steuart  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In a July 21 press release from the Foreign Ministry the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (GBRV) said that normalization of relations between Venezuela and the U.S. was conditional on the cessation of criticism, referring specifically to official reports released by the U.S. Government. The release of the GAO report on U.S. - Venezuelan counter-drug cooperation was the immediate reason for this statement, and similar reactions have followed the publication of other congressionally-mandated USG reports. GBRV officials have also pointed to Secretary of State Clinton's July 7 interview with Globovision as evidence that the United States is unfairly criticizing Venezuela. Although hypersensitive to any perception of U.S. criticism of Venezuela, President Chavez has accelerated his rhetoric against the U.S. since the June 28 coup in Honduras. End Summary.

-----  
USG REPORTS ARE "POLITICAL BLACKMAIL"  
-----

[1](#)2. (C) The GBRV rejects out-of-hand official USG reports as instruments of "political blackmail." Following the release of the Trafficking in Persons Report in June, the GBRV called it an obstacle to normalizing relations (ref D). Similarly, in response to the leaked GAO report on counter-drug operations in Venezuela (ref A), the Foreign Ministry said in a July 21 press release that this report, like others published by the USG, has no factual basis, and "the normalization of political relations with the government of the United States is conditional on the end of this intolerable practice" of criticizing Venezuela. Annual reports required by U.S. law and likely to result in similar indignation include the Human Rights Report, which prompted President Chavez to publicly curse President Obama (ref E), the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, the Venezuelan Country Report of Terrorism, the International Religious Freedom Report, and the Advancing Freedom and Democracy Report. GBRV officials severely restrict contact with the U.S. Embassy, and the Embassy has not received specific complaints about the content of these reports. Instead, the GBRV, led by President Chavez, has dismissed the reports publicly and entirely.

-----

¶3. (C) President Chavez was very unhappy about Secretary of State Clinton's July 7 interview to the opposition-oriented TV station Globovision, and the GBRV conveyed its outrage both publicly and privately (ref C). The GBRV Foreign Ministry issued a press release denouncing the interview on July 8. State media condemned the interview and attributed comments to Secretary Clinton that she did not say. The Venezuelan government channel VTV ran a 90-second parody of the interview (ref B) which as of July 28 remains available on its website.

¶4. (C) Comment: The Venezuelan government is not troubled by inconsistency between its words and actions, so we do not take at face value its conditioning of improved relations with the U.S. on the ending of critical comments in U.S. congressionally-mandated reports. More to the point is Chavez's anger at what he considers to be the U.S.- inspired coup in Honduras, and U.S. unwillingness to acquiesce to his confrontational strategy to restore the status quo ante in that country.

CAULFIELD